

Message Text

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PASS TREASURY FOR PARSKY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, SA

SUBJECT: US/SAUDI JOINT ECONCOMMISSION: STANDARDS ADVISOR

REF: A. STATE 236906; B. JIDDA 5925; C. STATE 227700

SUMMARY: REFTEL B STATED SPECIFICALLY THAT SAG NOW PLANS TO ASK CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO HELP DEVELOP CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS. WE THINK IT UNWISE, THEREFORE, TO SEND AN ADVISOR SPECIFICALLY SPECIALIZING IN THAT AREA. AS DETAILED BELOW, WE HAVE RECENTLY HAD A LONG DISCUSSION WITH MR. QUTB, DIRECTOR OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN STANDARDS ORGANIZATION (SASO), IN AN EFFORT TO CLARIFY SAUDI NEEDS AND DESIRES. AT THIS TIME HE EXPECTS AN EXPERT WHO CAN SURVEY SASO EFFORT AND RECOMMEND A DETAILED PROJECT FOR CONSIDERATION OF SAG AND USG. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTURE OF INDUSTRIAL CONSTRUCTION EXPERT BE REVIEWED AND HIS ROLE RECONSIDERED. IN NO CASE SHOULD ADVISOR ARRIVE IN SAUDI ARABIA BEFORE NOVEMBER 14. END SUMMARY

1. EMBASSY IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF AND CONCERNED WITH IMPRECISION IN SPECIFICATIONS FOR ROLE OF ADVISORS. THIS CONCERN IS SHARED BY AT LEAST SOME HIGH LEVEL SAUDIS (SEPTTEL). THE LACK OF DETAILS AND IMPRECISION COULD BE REDUCED IN WASHINGTON AS WELL AS IN SAUDI ARABIA. IN PARTICULAR WE NEED MUCH MORE ADVANCE NOTICE FROM WASHINGTON REGARDING ADVISORS AND WASHINGTON UNDERSTANDING OF ROLE.

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2. MR. QUTB, DIRECTOR OF SASO, HAS IN HAND A PROPOSAL FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO HIS ORGANIZATION. PLAN INCLUDES BACKGROUND, AND OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF SASO; AND PROPOSED WORK PLAN FOR A TEAM TO BE HEADED BY A GENERALIST TEAM LEADER WHO WOULD RESIDE IN RIYADH FOR AT LEAST 10 MONTHS. THIS LEADER WOULD BE ASSISTED BY EXPERTS IN BUILDING CODES AND BUILDING MATERIALS STANDARDS; FOOD STANDARDS, WITH EMPHASIS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES; A NUMBER OF SHORT-TERM CONSULTANTS TO COVER ADDITIONAL FIELDS OF ACTIVITY ON SITE; AND "SCIENTIST" EXPERTS TO ADVISE ON LABORATORY FACILITIES AND SERVICES.

3. QUTB EXPECTS FORTHCOMING EXPERT TO BE PREPARED TO SURVEY ENTIRE CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF SASO AND ADVISE ON: (A) APPROPRIATENESS AND DESIRABILITY OF REQUEST FOR ADVISORS; (B) ROLE USG CAN PLAY IN PROVIDING SUCH EXPERTS AND/OR AN OVERALL PLAN; (C) SURVEY EXISTING STANDARDS IN ORDER TO GET AN IDEA OF PRESENT ACTIVITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS. WE NOW HAVE ON HAND A LIST OF ALL PERSONNEL AT SASO AND EXPECT WITHIN THE WEEK TO RECEIVE AN ENGLISH COPY OF THE SASO 5-YEAR PLAN RECENTLY APPROVED BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. CURRENT ADVISOR WOULD SPEND ONE TO ONE AND A HALF WEEKS IN SASO, RIYADH OFFICE. HE WOULD THEN SPEND TIME WITH AFFECTED MINISTRIES AND VISIT FIELD LABORATORIES.

4. SASO'S CURRENT PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS (LISTS OF THOSE IN EXISTENCE AND THOSE UNDER PREPARATION WILL SOON BE AVAILABLE) ARE PRIMARILY FOOD, DRUGS, ELECTRICAL, AND BUILDING CODES AND MATERIALS. PAGE 6 OF REPORT ON SEPT 26-28 WORKING GROUP MEETING CALLS FOR THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO HELP DEVELOP A CODE OF STANDARDS FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. UNDOUBTEDLY NBS ADVISORS HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE OVERALL USG EFFORT WITH SASO, BUT CURRENT EFFORT CALLS FOR BROAD GAUGE ASSESSMENT OF ENTIRE SCOPE OF SASO EFFORT.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE A COMPLETE REASSESSMENT OF STANDARDS ADVISOR'S ROLE. IF MR. HAECKER CAN PROVIDE GENERALIZED REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH SAUDIS DESIRE, WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO HIS ASSIGNMENT.
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ALTERNATIVELY, THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ADDITIONAL OR DIFFERENT ADVISOR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.
IN NO EVENT SHOULD ADVISOR ARRIVE IN SAUDI ARABIA BEFORE NOV 14.

6. MR. QUTB HAS REQUESTED COMPLETE SET OF ANSI STANDARDS WHICH HE SAYS ARE ISSUED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. SAG WILL PAY COSTS INCLUDING SHIPPING TO

RIYADH (WE SUGGEST SHIPPING TO EMBASSY AS SAFER.) THIS
ACTION WOULD BE A GOOD GESTURE WITH WHICH TO OPEN
ADVISORS' MISSION.
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